

Getting Ink: 10 Tips for Working with Your Local Media

Once you've committed to supporting the *Ready Georgia* campaign, how do you engage your community? One of the most effective ways to reach people is through your local media. Whether you're a first-timer or a media pro, below are some tips to help you raise visibility – and credibility – for your disaster preparedness projects.

Getting Started:

- 1) **Know the news:** Read the local papers and watch the local news. The first step in getting your story or event covered is to get to know your local outlets.
- 2) **Target your approach:** Develop a local media list, including all area newspapers, magazines, TV and radio stations. Don't forget community newsletters, local access channels and radio public affairs shows. Locate the reporters and editors that cover your "beat" and *keep the list updated*. Don't hesitate to call to check on deadlines and note them in your list.
- 3) **Introduce yourself:** Let the media know who you are and your role in the community. Send them the Ready press kit or a localized release with a personal note and background on your organization. If time allows, invite key reporters to a "desk side briefing," an informal meeting to provide background and make a connection.
- 4) **Find a hook:** Members of the media are inundated with events and ideas for stories, so what you think is news may not always match their views. Show the reporter how your story is significant, timely or impacts their audiences. For TV pitches, make sure there is something visual for cameras to film.
- 5) **Be considerate of deadlines:** Always ask if a reporter has time to talk. Note deadline days in your media list and avoid calling then. If a major breaking story is happening in your local area, wait a day or two for the media interest to die down so your idea or release doesn't get lost or overlooked.

Nailing the interview:

- 6) **Be prepared:** Do your homework. Make notes for yourself, use the information on ready.ga.gov to develop talking points and gather stats and tools.
- 7) **Don't speculate:** If you don't know the answer, it's okay. Simply offer to find the out the information and get back to the reporter quickly.
- 8) **It's a sound bite world:** Particularly with broadcast media. Practice your key messages, then say them succinctly, and with animation.
- 9) **Talk to everyman:** Use plain English, avoid jargon and acronyms. Don't assume that the audience you're addressing knows anything about your issue, unless it's for a trade or industry publication.
- 10) **Communication is not just words:** Remember that nonverbal communication says a lot. Watch your gestures and expressions when you're on camera. Be natural, but don't fidget.